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# THE HUNTSMAN'S ECHO.

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**THE RETURNED LETTER.**  
How she strives her grief to smother  
Tears fell on the snowy page;  
To a daughter writes the mother,  
Calls her home to cheer her age.  
Weary then with looking—longing,  
Weeks and weeks pass sadly by;  
All the past to memory thronging—  
Hoping on, but—no reply.  
Till at last there comes a letter:  
'Tis her own, she traces there—  
Better she had died—far better—  
"Gone away and not known where."

From her home across the ocean,  
Blotting with repentant tears,  
Writes the daughter her emotion,  
How she turns to early years,  
Prays that heav'n may bless her mother,  
Tells her of her wedded joy,  
How she left for her another—  
Sends the picture of her boy,  
Then she waits to be forgiven,  
Till another year has fled;  
Back her letter, torn and riven,  
Comes, and on it written—"Dead."

**JOHN DAUNT.**

Moved by a soft strain of music, a  
man will sometimes turn his face up-  
ward, and look as though a paradise  
were opening above him. Opposite a  
striking picture a beholder will be-  
come as a statue. But a man stand-  
ing with his back to the wall, feasting  
his eyes upon a work-house, is, indeed,  
an odd sight. Thus, however, a man  
stood, and thus was he engaged one  
evening, many years ago.

It was Bramblestone Work-house  
which was so singularly an object of  
pleasant contemplation. The New  
Poor-Law had been enacted, and Mr.  
Jones, subsequently Relieving Officer  
was quite a young man, and had just  
been appointed Overseer.—He was  
coming on the night in question, to  
visit the "House," when the person  
first mentioned addressed him.

"Well, Mr. Jones, making your usual  
visit? Going to see John Daunt  
among the rest of the poor devils, eh?  
As was always demented—now he's  
uncommonly Daunted, I take it. Ha!  
ha!"

The tone of Mr. Jones' reply was  
civil, and nothing beyond.  
"Yes, sir; my customary visit, as  
you say. You are almost as regular  
as I am."

"True; I like to come and look at  
the horrid, dreary walls. There's  
something in the sight of those slips  
of windows which please. Old Jeri-  
cho! why, it's like a furnace out here  
to-night. What must it be in the rooms  
with such windows as those? But  
tell me how is Daunt? Dying by  
this time, I should think!"

Mr. Jones' shrug of disgust was not  
observable in the partial darkness.  
"Yes, he's dying, Mr. Mayner.—  
But excuse me. Good-night. I'm be-  
hind time." And he hurried away.

Mr. Mayner knocked the ashes  
from his cigar, replaced it in his mouth  
and sauntered away likewise.  
To be effeminate—to be weak in  
feeling and resolve—one shrinks from  
that notion, as picturing something so  
poor and mean. But to be bold and  
strong, and moved by the spirit of a  
fiend, is awful. John Daunt was an  
humble, shrinking creature from his  
boyhood, and from his boyhood Ralph  
Mayner was an unscrupulous, deter-  
mined villain. How these two men  
came to love the same woman is a  
mystery; but only one could have her,  
Ellen Leslie became the wife of John  
Daunt.

For Daunt actually ran away with  
her. If for one single instant, in the  
course of this dark story, I can allow  
myself to smile, it must be at the thought  
of this enterprise on the part of  
such a man as Daunt. But he was  
urged to it by despair. He knew that  
Ellen's parents were well-nigh forcing  
her into a marriage with his rival.—  
He knew that rival's character well,  
there was no time to be lost. The  
pair went away by moonlight, and  
were married. A year afterward Ellen  
Daunt gave birth to a son, and died.

As time rolled on additional trou-  
bles fell upon Daunt. A fatality seem-  
ed to hang over all he undertook.—  
He had settled near Bramblestone as  
a small farmer. For some years he just  
managed to live; but an unseen influ-  
ence was perpetually dodging around  
him, damaging his character and cred-  
it, indisposing people to deal with him,  
and causing him loss in various ways.  
Though he knew it not Ralph May-  
ner was busy. When that monster  
heard of the elopement he said, with a  
great oath, "I'll never leave him till  
I've crushed him!" And bringing his  
acute intellect and unswerving will to  
bear, backed by means and influence,

which he possessed to some extent,  
he so envied John Daunt with nets  
and pitfalls, that, although it was the  
work of years, it was a work done  
most effectually at last. John Daunt,  
one night, took his boy's hand, saying  
"God help us, Sydney! Your father  
is penniless and friendless."

At that time there was not a single person  
who came forward with the smallest  
aid. A brief struggle, and then poor  
John and his boy were received into  
Bramblestone Work-house.

Ralph Mayner heard the news. He  
had married some years before, and  
had one child—a daughter. He was  
now a widower.

It was a very hot summer. May-  
ner came with his little girl to Bram-  
blestone and took apartments outside  
the town, where the views were pret-  
ty and the air salubrious. Mayner  
then made acquaintance with the  
work-house officials, learned all particu-  
lars in regard to Daunt, and did not  
hesitate to avow his hatred against him  
although he did not communicate the  
cause.

Dead!—there was the end. John  
Daunt died very shortly after his ad-  
mission into the work-house. Ralph  
Mayner had fulfilled his oath; he had  
crushed his rival; his power was en-  
ded now.

But he would see the funeral.  
One fine, warm morning they laid  
poor John Daunt in his grave in  
Bramblestone churchyard. One moun-  
ter followed him—his boy, Sydney,  
who was about twelve years of age.—  
Yet may be more sorrow attend-  
ed the funeral than has oftentimes been  
present when scores of sombre faces  
have formed a dismal group round a  
grave-side. The ceremony over, the  
officials departed, leaving the weep-  
ing boy to follow when he pleased.

There had been gazing at the spec-  
tacle throughout the hard-hearted  
Ralph Mayner, and his pretty, pecu-  
liar-faced, gentle-looking daughter,  
some six years old. I fancy even  
Ralph experienced an unusual emo-  
tion when the ceremony was over.—  
He must have felt that now, indeed,  
the tragedy of "John Daunt and his  
Foe" was fully played out. At all  
events, his eye-lids drooped, and he  
let go his child's hand. On being re-  
leased, the little girl trotted away to  
Sydney Daunt, who was just leaving.

"Poor boy!" she said, gently, giv-  
ing him a sixpence. "Don't cry."  
He motioned her away, and would  
not take the money.  
"Do take it," urged the tiny maid-  
en; "I have plenty."

Just then waking from his reverie,  
Ralph Mayner witnessed with ex-  
treme surprise and anger, the commu-  
nication passing between the children.  
He ran to the spot, caught his little  
girl with one hand, and with the other,  
seized Sydney's cap, and flung it  
over the church yard wall. Now, for  
several minutes past, there had been  
leaning over that wall, watching the  
parties, a respectable-looking, hearty,  
healthy-faced man, on the unfavorable  
side of sixty. I may as well say, at  
once, that this person was a London  
tradesman, who had been staying in  
Bramblestone a fortnight, and was re-  
turning next day. He was an eccen-  
tric being, had not a relative in the  
world, but, as compensation, had plenty  
of money. Sydney's cap had just  
touched the ground before he was by  
Mayner's side, shaking in his face a  
robust fist that made Ralph shrink  
back.

"You're a brute, and a beast, and  
a vile scoundrel!" cried the indig-  
nant tradesman. "If I had my will,  
you should break stones all day, and  
sleep on thistles all night," he added;  
and then, turning his back on the as-  
tonished Mayner, the curious old gen-  
tleman seized Sydney by the hand,  
hurried him out of the church-yard,  
and then bade him "tell him all about  
it."

Thus enjoined, the boy communi-  
cated the entire history of his woes  
and those of his deceased father.

Would you come with me to Lon-  
don? I inquired his newly-found friend,  
when he had done.

"Gladly," was the answer.  
Without further discussion the two  
went to the work-house. Applica-  
tion was made for leave to remove  
the boy, which, after the usual forms,  
was granted; and very quickly the  
tradesman and his charge were on  
their way to London. It was a long,  
long while before Bramblestone again  
heard of Sydney Daunt.

**PART II.**

Twenty years. In that period  
round changes, both for good and evil,  
came to pass. Twenty years from

the ending of the first part of this story  
had brought grey hairs to Ralph  
Mayner, and with them anxieties and  
troubles which bore hard upon him.  
He had speculated and been unsuccess-  
ful, and now, with broken health  
and soured temper, he found himself  
with a cloud of difficulties hanging over  
him. He was not a poor man even  
now, but he had become involved in  
a variety of schemes, so interwoven,  
that unless he could keep them all  
healthily afloat, the whole would col-  
lapse and ruin him. That gloomy is-  
sue stared him awfully in the face  
at this very time. A period of gener-  
al and great pressure had arisen. Ev-  
ery body was trying to borrow—nob-  
ody seemed willing to lend. Ralph  
wanted a couple of thousand pounds.  
Wanted it!—he must have it. It  
was a life and death matter to him—  
he would be ruined without it. In a  
few days acceptances to that amount  
would come due. If they were dis-  
honored, Ralph would be utterly pros-  
trated.

And yet he had tried in every quar-  
ter and failed. Ralph frightened his  
kind, loving daughter, Annie—he  
looked at times so stern, and became  
so fickle in his humor.

They sat together one evening.  
"I am going to London to-morrow,"  
said Ralph, abruptly.

"To-morrow, papa, and so unwell  
as you are!"

"Yes, Annie; you know that I'm  
on the brink of ruin."

"Oh, my dear father."

"There, pray don't cry. I hate crying.  
People should never cry after they are  
six years old. But I want you to know  
exactly how the case stands. Bills  
for two thousand pounds will come  
due in the course of a day or two.—  
They must be taken up, or we must  
go out of the country. I have no mo-  
ney available, and no one will lend  
me any. The only chance is in seeing  
Crawshaw, the solicitor. He has re-  
fused by letter; but I think if I could  
see him he would alter his mind."

"But, dear papa, even should he  
refuse, surely we need not leave En-  
gland. If the people who hold these  
securities will only give you time, you  
will pay them."

Ralph laughed, grimly.

"Perhaps they might, under ordi-  
nary circumstances, Annie; but there  
is one small unfortunate feature about  
these bills, which will interfere. Can  
you guess it?"

"Not in the least, papa."

"I forgot them."

A little scream and a deadly faint-  
ness were the result of this communi-  
cation.

"There now, Annie, don't let us  
have no heroics, hysterics, or any-  
thing of the kind. Listen! There  
is no reason why you should deem  
your father worse than he really is.  
If ever there was a palliation for—  
for the not I have mentioned, it is here.  
The people owed me money, and  
would neither pay me nor give me  
their acceptances. I was shockingly  
pressed, and at length made the bills.  
If I can find money to what is called  
'retire' them in a couple of days, all  
will be well. If I cannot, I must  
run away. If they catch me, they  
will transport me for life."

Ralph said this in a jaunty way,  
with his back to the fire, and his arms  
under his coat tails. Annie sat pale  
and shivering.

"So, Annie, the first thing in the  
morning, you'll pack up as much as  
you can without creating wonderment  
in the house, and we'll go together to-  
gether to London. Now, my candle,  
please, and we'll be to bed. Kiss me,  
Annie. Bless my heart! the silly  
thing is all in a quiver, and her lips  
and cheeks are cold as ice. You must  
get over these school girl shakings,  
Annie. Your father never remembers  
being a boy. At your age you should  
no longer be a child."

To London they went. They found  
apartments in a not very lively local-  
ity—Salisbury Street, in the Strand.  
To Crawshaw, the Solicitor, straight-  
way repaired Mr. Mayner.

"Ah, Mr. Mayner, how d'ye do? I  
cried Crawshaw, buoyantly, extending  
his hand. Staying in town, eh?"

"For a very short time," replied  
Ralph. "I wrote you the other day."

Yes, and I replied. "I should have  
been delighted, you know, but bless  
me, just at this moment, we, in Lon-  
don, are on the brink of ruin;" and  
Crawshaw rubbed his hands slowly,  
and his face was radiant with smiles.

"Well, the case is this," said Ralph.  
"I should be very glad of that money  
if you can in any way manage it.—  
No great matter, of course; but still  
just at this time—"

"My dear Sir," interrupted the law-  
yer, "there really is no money.— I  
don't think I could squeeze out a fifty-  
pound note to save my own father  
from bankruptcy."

"Humph!" grunted Ralph, "it will  
bother me."

Crawshaw's only reply was to put  
his hands in his pockets, and look  
more benevolent than before.

"How's Miss Annie?" he asked,  
after a pause.

An expression crept across his face  
which Crawshaw did not observe.

"By the way, when did you see  
young Lucerne last?" he inquired.

"Six weeks back."

"Then you don't know what's oc-  
curred?"

"Eh? No. No thing bad, I hope,  
to Lucerne; for he is a nice young  
fellow—plenty of money, and a good  
client."

"He's about making somebody a  
good husband," said Ralph, signifi-  
cantly.

"What!" cried Crawshaw; "You  
don't mean—is it—he is going to mar-  
ry our dear young lady?"

Ralph nodded. (A great vagabond  
was Ralph.)

"I'm astounded? All settled?"

"Every thing."

"Humph! I'm right glad. A little  
business for me, too. I shall have  
Lucerne here shortly, no doubt, about  
the settlement. Ha! Ha! But stay,  
I'm forgetting your own particular  
matter."

"Oh, if there is not fifty pounds to  
be had—" Ralph was beginning, ear-  
nivally.

"Oh, well, never mind that; we  
must see, you know. I've a client,  
the protégé of an old tradesman, who  
has lately died and left him a heap of  
money. He'll want to see you him-  
self, for he's rather a funny customer.  
But come here the first thing in the  
morning, and I dare say we shall  
manage it. Good-by! Good-by!"

"I think we shall be able to go back  
to Bramblestone safe and sound, An-  
nie," said Ralph, when he had re-  
turned to his daughter.

"Thank God, papa!"

"There's no doubt he'll do it. I  
think," muttered Ralph to himself.

It's running it rather close, though.  
I must have the money to-morrow.

Early the next morning Ralph was  
with Crawshaw.

"Well, said the latter, my man is  
in the other room."

"Can I have the money at once?"  
asked Ralph, with barely concealed  
anxiety.

"He'll give you the cheque in this  
room, my friend. I know he'll do it,  
for he said so, but he wants to see  
you."

He walked to the door of an inner  
room, and opened it.

"Walk in, Mr. Daunt. Will you  
be kind enough? Mr. Daunt, Mr.  
Mayner. Mr. Mayner—Eh! Bless  
me! what's wrong?"

Nothing, so far as Sidney Daunt  
was concerned, for the lawyer's com-  
munication had revealed to him  
(though he had said nothing to the  
lawyer) to whom he was asked to  
lend, but Ralph fell back, saying,  
hushly,

"Have we seen each other before  
Sir?"

"I am Sidney Daunt," was the re-  
ply. "Twenty years since you and  
I were in Bramblestone Churchyard.  
Nay, don't turn away, Mr. Mayner.  
Let that story drop. I have no  
desire for what men call revenge. You  
want a couple of thousand pounds—  
there is the check."

"And do you think," he uttered, in  
a hoarse voice, "that I am become a  
weak, cry-baby thing like John Daunt,  
your father?" Oh! this is beautiful!

Here is a scene! Here is Christian  
vengeance! Shall I go on my knees  
and weep over you, young man?—  
Shall I beg a blessing on you, and en-  
treat forgiveness for the past? Hark  
ye, now! I would be torn limb from  
limb first! Sooner than take that  
check I'd burn myself bit by bit in  
yonder fire. I hate you! You have  
your triumph, you white-faced school  
girl; but it shall go no further. Even  
now, Ralph Mayner can despise you  
from the bottom of his soul, and can  
hurl at you a lasting defiance."

And he rushed from the room into  
the street, mad and desperate.

Many hours had passed, and Annie  
had become uneasy on account of her  
father's lengthened absence. Toward  
afternoon she determined to seek him  
at Mr. Crawshaw's office, which she  
knew to be in Gray's Inn. Being  
quite unacquainted with London, it is  
not strange that she lost her way, and

Concluded on fourth page.